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ABSTRACT

This report examines the relationship between outreach projects and the new State Grants Program involved in the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP). Following a brief review of HCEEP'S mission and history, the State Grants Program and its three types of grants are described: planning, development, and implementation grants. Distinctions between the State Grant Program and an earlier program, the State Implementation Grant, are offered. Noted is the emphasis on collaboration between outreach activities and state-level agencies and programs, and collaboration is seen to take three forms: activities that support outreach goals, activities that support state goals, and activities to support early intervention. Suggestions are made for planning future collaboration. (CL)

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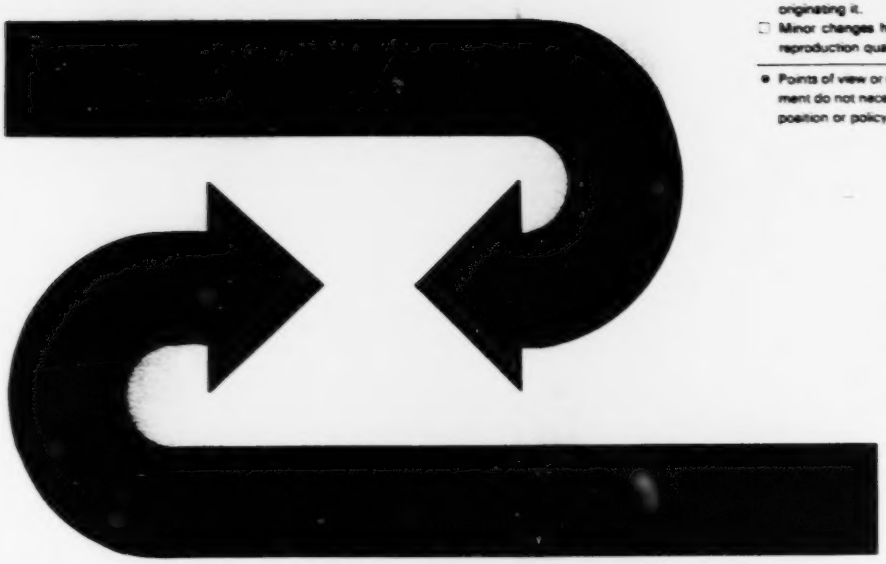

Outreach and States Working Together

by
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This paper deals with the relationship between outreach projects and the new State Grants Program that became a part of the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP) with the passage of Public Law 98-199 in December, 1983. It describes the major features of the new State Grants Program and distinguishes the program from its predecessor, the HCEEP State Implementation Grants (SIG). Drawing upon information gathered by TADS from outreach projects, this paper also describes several ways outreach projects have worked successfully with state agencies in the past. Cooperation between outreach projects and state-level agencies is by no means a new idea. Knowledge of these past cooperative endeavors should be helpful to outreach project directors as they consider how to work more closely with states.

The new State Grants Program, which will involve every state and territory in the United States, is bound to influence the future of the HCEEP Outreach Program. Cooperative planning and mutual support among state grantees and outreach projects will become increasingly important over the next several years. An outreach project needs to understand the specific features and the long-range intent of the new State Grants Program in order to best determine how their own outreach efforts and the planned activities of state grantees can be mutually beneficial.

The Mission and History of HCEEP

The Handicapped Children's Early Education Program was created by the Education of the Handicapped Act in 1968. HCEEP was included in this broad and far-reaching legislation because (1) the Congress believed that early intervention for handicapped children and their families was an important part of the total effort required to educate handicapped children, and (2) without a federal initiative such services would not develop effectively throughout the nation. The proper starting point for understanding the purpose of the new State Grants Program, as well as the Outreach Program, is the abiding mission of HCEEP, to bring about the time when all the nation's young handicapped children will have the early intervention services they and their families need.

The Grass Roots Approach

The first strategy for accomplishing this mission was a "grass roots" approach. Through the funding of locally based demonstration projects in selected communities across the country, exemplary early intervention models and practices were developed. Then, with the funding of outreach projects, many other locally based programs were encouraged and supported in adopting and adapting these models and practices. The programs developed through this "grass roots" approach have significantly influenced the expansion and quality of services to young handicapped children. Given the relatively small amount

of federal resources invested over the years in demonstration and outreach projects, their impact has been remarkable. According to a report on the impact of HCEEP prepared by Roy Littlejohn Associates (1982), between 1969 and 1980 HCEEP had stimulated 2157 replications. Each replication served an average of 50 children, for a total of 107,850 additional children known to be served.

Despite this demonstrated impact, the "grass roots" approach has been inadequate to accomplish fully the HCEEP mission. The development of services has been slow and uneven in many parts of the country in spite of efforts by demonstration and outreach projects, because of a lack of interest and support at local and state levels.

The Importance of State Commitment

State-level support of early intervention services is also crucial to the fulfillment of the HCEEP mission. Those states that have made commitments to support early intervention services through legislative mandates and/or state appropriations are generally much closer to making early intervention services available to all handicapped children and their families than those states which have not made such a commitment. Encouraging such commitment and support has also been an important strategy for HCEEP over the years.

In the early 1970s HCEEP first supported long-range planning efforts in three pilot states, and then offered technical assistance to several others that expressed interest in planning for early intervention services. In 1976 HCEEP began the State Implementation Grant (SIG) program, which provided funding as well as technical assistance to state education agencies (SEAs). Through SIG grants, the SEAs addressed specific needs related to early intervention services in their states.

Other federal programs also have provided support to states for early intervention program development. These include Preschool Incentive Grants (created as a part of Public Law 94-142), the Developmental Disabilities Program, and some Maternal and Child Health programs.

The New HCEEP State Grants Program

In 1983, Congress established a new grant program for states which has replaced the State Implementation Grants. This new program, contained in Section 623 of Public Law 98-199, represents the most ambitious federal initiative to date to encourage state-level commitment to early intervention services. It goes far beyond the SIGs program in terms of the number of states that can participate, the scope of the tasks states must accomplish, and the amount of HCEEP dollars committed to state grants. There are several key features of the new grants program that are important for outreach projects to understand, including how it differs from the old SIG program.

Its Purpose Is Comprehensive

The purpose of the State Grants Program is to assist a state "in planning, developing, and implementing a comprehensive delivery system for the provision of special education and related services to handicapped children from birth through five years of age." P.L. 98-199, Sec. 623(b)(1). A key phrase in this initial statement of purpose is a comprehensive delivery system. It means that the state must address a broad range of activities and issues related to the provision of services to handicapped infants and young children. The regulations developed by the Department of Education to guide this grant program offer further clarification of what a comprehensive delivery system should include:

> (b) A comprehensive service delivery system includes --
>
> (1) A statewide system for identifying and locating, as early as possible, children who are handicapped or at risk of being handicapped. This includes the prenatal period if there is evidence that a child will be born handicapped;
> (2) Comprehensive and continuing assessment and diagnosis of children who are identified as handicapped or at risk of being handicapped;
> (3) Special education and related services appropriate to each handicapped child's developmental level and handicapping condition;
> (4) A continuum of alternative placements to meet the individual needs of handicapped children for special education and related services;
> (5) Involvement of parents in the planning, development, and implementation of the education and services provided to their handicapped children;
> (6) A personnel development program to ensure appropriately trained instructional and supportive staff;
> (7) Coordination of the activities of educational, health, social services, and other agencies to ensure effective use of available services and to relate service delivery programs to state and local planning;
> (8) Information concerning the needs of handicapped children and the availability of services; and
> (9) Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the services and programs provided to handicapped children and others involved in their education and care.
>
> Federal Register Vol. 49: No. 134 (11 July 1984), p.28357.

Three Types of Grants Are Given

The law specifies three types of grants to states that are in keeping

with the stated purpose of the State Grants Program. First is a two-year Planning Grant which supports assessing the needs of the states in relationship to a comprehensive delivery system. It also supports preliminary planning leading to the establishment of a procedure and design for formal development of a state plan for a comprehensive delivery system. The second is a three-year Development Grant. Under this grant a state develops its comprehensive state plan and obtains approval of that plan from the appropriate officials or governing bodies within state government. The third type of grant is an Implementation Grant which supports the state in implementing and evaluating the comprehensive state plan. Implementation Grants can be awarded for up to three years.

These three types of grants represent a planned sequence of activities intended to accomplish the purpose stated in the law. States may enter the sequence with a Development Grant or even an Implementation Grant. However, most have chosen to enter with a Planning Grant, which gives them the opportunity for up to eight years of federal support in developing their state's capacity to serve handicapped children from birth to school age.

All States Can Receive a Grant

Under the SIG program states competed against one another for grants and only about twenty or so were awarded each year. Under the new grants program any state that submits an acceptable application will receive a grant. In 1985-86 every state and territory except Puerto Rico received a state grant.

Grant Recipients Are Not Limited to State Education Agencies

Under the SIG program a grant could only be given to a state education agency. Under the new program a grant may be given to a state through its state education agency or another state agency. It is even acceptable for two agencies to submit a joint application. States are limited, however, to one grant per state. This allows each state more flexibility in determining the most appropriate leadership for planning.

Interagency Collaboration Is Required

While several states used SIG grants to focus on collaborative planning among key state agencies, such collaboration was not a grant requirement. Under the new grants program, whatever state agency applies for the state's grant must provide assurances that it will coordinate activities with other appropriate state agencies in carrying out the grant. The new program also requires that the state plan which is developed be closely coordinated with two other state activities specified in P.L. 98-199: (1) child-find efforts under section 612, and (2) preschool incentive grant activities under section 619.

Minimum Funding Level and Technical Assistance Are Guaranteed

Section 623 of Public Law 98-199 specifies that at least 30 percent of the annual HCEEP appropriation must be spent on the State Grants Program. It also requires that some of the annual appropriations be set aside to support technical assistance to every state and territory that participates in the grant program. Currently the technical assistance services are provided through the State Technical Assistance Resource Team (START) program, located at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. START and TADS work closely together as technical assistance resources to all HCEEP programs.

Outreach/State Collaboration

The coordination of outreach activities with state-level agencies and programs is not a new concept. Since the inception of the Outreach Program in 1972, outreach projects have had a history of working collaboratively with states, particularly with the former State Implementation Grants. With the establishment of the new State Grants Program, such collaboration becomes even more critical to the success of an outreach project.

An examination of the past interactions between outreach projects and SIGs and other state programs can provide a springboard for currently funded outreach projects to design their own strategies for collaborating with states. For the purposes of this paper, the interactions between outreach projects and states can be divided into three basic types of activities: activities that support outreach goals, activities that support state goals, and cooperative activities that support early intervention in general.

Activities That Support Outreach Goals

Activities that support outreach goals are collaborations between outreach projects and states in which the major outcome furthers the goals and objectives of the outreach project. Perhaps the most common way in which states have supported outreach projects is by helping the projects identify and develop model replication in adoption sites.

States have helped outreach projects develop sites in a variety of ways. Sometimes this help has taken the form of introductions to key personnel who are responsible for staff or program development in the state. If the outreach services available were in line with the state needs, projects were then put in contact with local program directors to investigate further the possibility for site development.

Other states and projects have followed a more direct route to site development. Some states have sponsored mini-outreach-training sessions for all state-funded early intervention programs. Programs were invited to a central location to meet with an outreach project and learn about the services

available from the project to potential sites. Other states have expanded this concept and held "outreach training fairs." Several outreach projects were invited to meet local program staff and present an overview of the services available from each project. Local programs that were interested in becoming outreach sites were encouraged to follow up with the project of their choice.

All of these methods of site identification and development have been effective. The choice of approach has been a matter of matching state needs to availability of outreach resources.

Some states have been able to offer a different kind of assistance to outreach projects. Many projects in the past have received funds to subsidize the cost of outreach training services in the state. Whether or not states help defray outreach training costs typically depended on the needs of the local programs and the availability of other resources in the state.

Activities That Support State Goals

Activities that support state goals are those collaborations between outreach projects and states whose primary outcome benefits the state's early intervention goals. The ways in which past outreach projects have been of service to states are many and varied. These collaborations can be considered under the categories of planning, implementation, and evaluation.

In the area of planning, outreach projects and states often have worked together from the beginning of a state's planning efforts. Several outreach projects helped their states respond to the initial SIG proposals. Once SIGs were funded, most outreach projects worked with the states at the planning level by serving on advisory councils and other committees and by helping to develop state plans and planning documents. Several outreach projects also were asked to help their states plan for personnel needs by recommending certification standards for early intervention personnel.

In the area of implementation of state early intervention plans, past outreach projects have provided states with a valuable resource. Many projects were able to help states identify the current services for young handicapped children and the service providers. States were able to use this information in determining where funding for services was most needed and how to avoid duplication of efforts.

Outreach projects were also able to help states implement their early intervention plans and programs by assisting in the development of statewide program standards and "best practices" recommendations. Many outreach projects have been able to serve as a resource in this important area.

Perhaps the most frequent collaborative outreach/state effort in the area of implementation was the ongoing participation of outreach project staff on state-level advisory councils, not just for SIGs, but also for developmental disabilities councils, state education agencies, regional access projects, and other early-intervention-related agencies and programs. This sharing of expertise has been one of the most successful ways in which outreach projects have integrated themselves into the states in which they are working.

Outreach projects also have been valuable to states in the area of evaluation of state activities. In several instances, states have requested assistance from outreach project to evaluate programs funded by the state. In one instance, an outreach project compiled, analyzed, and disseminated child-change data from service programs for the state agency funding the program.

Activities to Support Early Intervention

The final category of outreach/state collaboration is those activities which were engaged in jointly to benefit early intervention in general. Most of these activities have been in the areas of legislation and public awareness.

In most states that have recently passed early intervention legislation, the legislation has resulted from the combined efforts of a variety of groups and individuals. Often state-level agencies and outreach projects were partners in investigating the need for this legislation and in developing recommendations concerning specific features of the proposed legislation. These joint efforts usually took the form of mutual participation on advisory councils, in legislative study groups, and in state early intervention consortia.

Finally, public awareness activities were a frequent area of collaboration between outreach projects and states. They shared a common goal of increasing high quality services to young handicapped children and their families by making the public aware of the needs of this group and of the services already available. In several states, outreach projects and the state cosponsored conferences on early intervention. Where outreach projects and states each disseminated newsletters, articles were frequently exchanged as well. In one instance, an outreach project and state jointly developed a resource guide to services in that state. The guide increased professional and public awareness of where services were located and where services still were needed.

In summary, currently funded outreach projects can learn much about how to increase their effectiveness and maximize the impact of their project by studying the activities of past outreach projects. The collaborations between states and outreach projects in the past can serve as a template for newly funded outreach projects as they plan their future involvement with the state planning grants.

The Need for Further Collaboration

The HCEEP Outreach Program has much to offer states as they plan, develop, and implement comprehensive delivery systems for handicapped children birth through age five. Collectively, the outreach projects represent a substantial information base concerning the various aspects of a comprehensive

delivery system. They also represent a technical assistance and training resource for states in addressing both state and local level needs.

The new HCEEP State Grants Program, if it is successful, should have a significant impact on local level commitment to providing early intervention services. It has the potential for being the most systematic and pervasive strategy yet for accomplishing the mission of HCEEP. But, to be successful, states must be able to draw upon all the other resources of the HCEEP program, especially the resources of outreach projects. Therefore, there is an increased need for collaboration and cooperative planning between states and outreach projects. Both can benefit greatly by working together in the years ahead.

Planning Your Future Collaborations

At the 1984 HCEEP Project Directors' Meeting in Washington, D.C., TADS sponsored a meeting between outreach projects and newly funded state grantees. The purpose of this meeting was to encourage a dialogue on ways in which outreach projects and state grantees can help each other achieve their respective goals for providing comprehensive services to young handicapped children. The participants met in small groups to exchange ideas about future collaboration.

Interestingly, the recommendations arising from these small group discussions reaffirmed the collaborative activities that have been described in the historical perspective section of this paper. Because of the diversity of the outreach projects and the states involved, many of the participants in the small group meetings were unaware that the coordination activities they were recommending were already operating in other states with other outreach projects.

Clearly, the need exists for outreach projects and state grantees to exchange information across states, not just within the state. Some state grantees are in the process of forming regional consortia to share information. Outreach projects operating in a geographic region can benefit from participating in such information exchange networks.

If information exchange is one of the most valuable activities that outreach projects and states can engage in, preparation is the key to the success of the exchange. Outreach projects must do their homework. Find out about the state plan activities in your own state and in any state in which your project provides outreach services. The HCEEP Overview and Directory, published annually by TADS, can help you identify persons to contact to learn about state plans in each of the states.

After you have investigated the state plan activities in the states relevant to your project, examine the model that is the basis of your outreach services. Pay special attention to the way in which your project's model and services might fit into the state plan activities you have investigated. Remember that a diversity of outreach models exists. It is not necessary, or even advisable, for your outreach project to be all things to all states. Rather, your investigation will help you find a good match between your outreach services and the individual state's needs and plans.

Once you have identified areas of congruence between your outreach project and the state plan, you are ready to offer your project as a resource to the state. Identify a contact person at the state level. Send a list of any current adoptions of your model operating in the state. It is also a good idea to send copies of curricula and other materials your project has developed and is using as a basis for outreach training in the state. All of these steps help establish your communication with state planners and allow them to learn about the services available from your project.

After communication has been initiated, keep your contact person updated on your outreach activities in their state. A quarterly report detailing new site development and ongoing training with established model adoption sites is one way successful outreach projects have maintained good communication with states in the past.

The more your state contact knows about your outreach project and its activities, the more likely he or she will be to remember the project when resources and other assistance are needed. If possible, schedule regular meetings with the state to keep your project visible. Prepare carefully for these meetings, and come ready to suggest specific ways in which your project can further state plan goals. At the same time, be open to ideas and suggestions from the state contact concerning future collaboration.

Outreach projects represent years of effort by exemplary model projects and provide one of the best and most natural resources available to the states for the development of state plans for comprehensive early intervention services. Preparation and planning will ensure that your project has a place in this critically important activity.

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